

Whiteout

Erika Saunders

If you've never been in a blizzard before you're probably thinking about it all wrong. It isn't the snow that'll get you but the wind. Gusting to whiteout. An oppressive wind, that will knock you down and plaster-cast you frigidly in place. When I was summer-young and went swimming; I would break the water surface, throwing my head back to toss my long hair out of the way. When I didn't use enough force, my hair would stay slicked to my face, an oil spill, and I couldn't help but try to suck breath through that sealed curtain door. And I marvelled at drowning amidst all that air. Blizzard winds will drown you that way, by suction-cupping snow to your lips while freezing red your nostril tips. It's said, old-timers would tie a rope from the house to the barn; navigating by feel alone. Trusting that rope in that near-numb, white-blind world. I imagine they heard, on a Sunday, of the priest entering the Holy of Holies with a rope around his ankle, so his dead body could be pulled out if he wasn't worthy. I wonder if those old-timers gave it a thought as they bundled up to go feed the livestock before facing that suffocating wind. Maybe they strained thinking they heard those ephod bells a-ringing in the wind. Stories tell of those who lost their grip and froze to death within a few feet of their own front door step. You, my love, resembled the rope.